



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza

Albany, New York 12237

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Commissioner

Dennis P. Whalen
Executive Deputy Commissioner

October 2005

Dear Colleague:

I am writing in follow-up to my previous letter regarding the increasing use of methamphetamine and the dangers it poses, including increasing the risk of HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, (STDs) and hepatitis. My December 2004 letter included: (a) suggested action steps that your agency/organization can take, (b) an overview of health consequences of methamphetamine use, and (c) a listing of available resources. For enhanced access, the letter is available on the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) web site at:

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/crystalmeth/dearcolleagueletter.htm

The Resource Sheet that accompanied the letter offers live links to information from numerous local, state and federal sources. By visiting the Department of Health's web site, you, your staff and your clients can access a wealth of information.

Intervening against methamphetamine use is critical, as is making referrals to substance abuse treatment and counseling programs. In addition to its toll-free helpline at 1-800-522-5353, the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services offers on-line access to statewide directories of treatment and prevention providers at:

<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/pio/needhlp.cfm>

For methamphetamine users who cannot enter drug treatment, it is important to stress harm reduction principles to prevent HIV infection and other medical problems.

Need for a Focus on Injection-Related Risks While methamphetamine can be ingested by swallowing, snorting or smoking, some users prefer injection. Unless safe injection techniques are used, practices used to inject methamphetamine carry with them increased risk for transmitting and acquiring HIV and hepatitis C.

Many methamphetamine injectors may not know how to reduce the risks associated with injection. Provision of information and referrals for services that can help methamphetamine injectors reduce risks associated with injection practices are vitally important if we are to prevent HIV and viral hepatitis infections. Ideally, individuals served by your agency/organization who may be injecting or even considering injecting methamphetamine should have access to information about safe injection techniques. We need your help to make sure that this happens.

Access to Sterile Syringes and Information about Safer Injection Techniques There are 15 New York State Department of Health-approved harm reduction/syringe exchange programs (SEPs), most of which are in New York City (see attached). Syringe exchange services are provided as part of a comprehensive harm reduction model, through which clients who will not or cannot abstain from drug use or will not or cannot enter into treatment, can learn methods to reduce the risk of HIV infection and other harm to themselves and their partners. In addition to the provision of clean injection equipment, harm reduction services include:

- distribution and demonstration of bleach kits and safer injection techniques;
- distribution and demonstration of condoms and dental dams;
- provision of information on risk reduction practices related to sexual and drug-using behaviors;
- distribution of other harm reduction supplies and literature; and
- direct provision of or referrals to HIV counseling and testing, partner notification assistance, drug treatment, health care, legal, housing and social services.

As noted above, in addition to making sterile syringes available, SEPs provide other harm reduction supplies. This is important because sharing of injection equipment other than syringes - - water, bottle caps (used to mix drugs), cotton (used to filter the mixture) - - carries with it risk of infection. SEP staff can also help advise methamphetamine injectors how to reduce risks associated with preparation of drugs for injection and sharing of drugs. The SEPs have been trained to serve as a resource for crystal methamphetamine issues.

SEPs have been found to be effective in reducing syringe sharing and other injection-related risk behaviors. Many SEPs have already taken steps to help meet the needs of methamphetamine injectors. Specific initiatives include new informational materials about health risks associated with methamphetamine use, health education/support groups specifically for methamphetamine injectors, and outreach to venues frequented by methamphetamine injectors.

In addition, up to ten sterile syringes may be purchased at any one time by persons age 18 and over without a prescription in most community pharmacies statewide. To locate a directory of pharmacies that are registered with the Expanded Syringe Access Demonstration Program (ESAP) to sell syringes without a prescription, go to the Department's web site at:

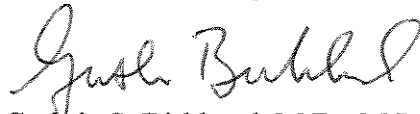
http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/esap/provdirect.htm

There are over 2,800 ESAP providers across NYS.

Availability of Training Surrounding Drugs and the Principles of Harm Reduction AIDS Institute-funded regional training centers offer a number of trainings on substance use and harm reduction. In addition, the Harm Reduction Coalition is funded as a training "center of expertise" in harm reduction. For information about upcoming trainings visit the Department's web site at: www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/training/index.htm.

I urge you to encourage your staff to become familiar with information about methamphetamine use and about programs and services to which individuals may be referred.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guthrie Birkhead". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Guthrie" and last name "Birkhead" clearly distinguishable.

Guthrie S. Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, AIDS Institute

Attachment

**New York State Department of Health
AIDS Institute
Resource Sheet: Methamphetamine Injection**

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

- NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services' toll-free helpline
1-800-522-5353
- Information for the Public: How to Find Help, other Frequently Asked Questions
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/www/Audience.cfm?audience=GenPublic>
- To Access On-Line Directories of Substance Abuse Treatment and Prevention Providers
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/pio/needhlp.cfm>

New York State Department of Health-Approved Syringe Exchange Programs (SEPs)

New York City

- AIDS Center of Queens County
4257 Hunter Street, Long Island City NY 11101 Telephone Number: 718-869-2500
- Family Services Network of NY
1639 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207 Telephone Number: 718-573-3358
- CitiWide Harm Reduction Program
250 E. 143rd St., 3rd Fl, Bronx, NY 10451 Telephone Number: 718-292-7718
- FROST'D
369 8th Ave, NY, NY 10001 Telephone Number: 212-924-3733
- Housing Works (SEP open to Housing Works' clients only)
130 Crosby Street, New York, NY 10012 Telephone Number: 347-473-7404
- Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center
25 Allen St., New York, NY 10002 Telephone Number: 212-226-6333
- NY Harm Reduction Educators (Bronx-Harlem)
903 Dawson St, Bronx, NY 10459 Telephone Number: 718-842-6050

- Positive Health Project
301 W 37th St, 2nd Fl, NY, NY 10018 Telephone Number: 212-465-8304
- Queens Hospital Center
166-10 Archer Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11433 Telephone Number: 718-883-4027
- St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction
310 Walton Avenue Suite 201, Bronx NY 10451 Telephone Number: 718-585-5544
- The After Hours Project
1232 Broadway, Brooklyn NY 11221 Telephone Number: 718-249-0755

Outside of New York City

- AIDS Rochester
844 N. Clinton Ave, Rochester, NY 14605 Telephone Number: 716-454-5556
- Southern Tier AIDS Program (STAP)
501 South Meadow Street, Rt. 13, Ithaca, NY 14850 Telephone Number: 607-272-4098
- Kaleida Health/PROJECT REACH
206 S. Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14201 Telephone Number: 716-845-0172
- Urban League of Westchester
10 Fiske Place, Mount Vernon, NY 10550 Telephone Number: 914-667-1010

Information about the above programs may also be located at:

- <http://www.harmreduction.org/usnep/newyork/hours.html>
Note: Click on Resources, then Syringe Exchange, then US Needle Exchange Locations and Hours, then New York (State and City).
- <http://www.hivpositive.com/f-Resources/f-19-NeedleExPgms/19-NYexchange.html>

Expanded Syringe Access Demonstration Program

- Expanded Syringe Access Demonstration Program Directory
http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/esap/provdirect.htm

Principles of Harm Reduction

- Harm Reduction Coalition “Principles of Harm Reduction” at:
<http://www.harmreduction.org>
Note: Click on About HRC

- Drug Policy Alliance “Reducing Harm: Treatment and Beyond”
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/reducingharm/>

Harm Reduction Training

- AIDS Institute HIV Education and Training Program
www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/training/index.htm
- Harm Reduction Training Institute at:
<http://harmreduction.org/hrti/>